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THE

MARTYRS OF CONSCIENCE:

A Bicentenary Ode.

ERRATA.

Page 18, line 13, *dele* the semicolon.
" 23, " 14, *for* "have" *read* "has."
" 33, " 11, *for* "heart" *read* "hearts."

Κράτιστοι δ' ἂν τὴν ψυχὴν δικαίως κριθεῖεν οἱ τά τε δεινὰ καὶ ἡδέα σαφέστατα γιγνώσκοντες, καὶ διὰ ταῦτα μὴ ἀποτρεπόμενοι ἐκ τῶν κινδύνων.

London:
WARD & CO., 27, PATERNOSTER ROW.
1862.

280. c. 123.

LONDON:
GEORGE UNWIN, GRESHAM STEAM PRESS,
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"Render therefore to all their dues: . . . honour to whom honour."

"Render therefore unto Cæsar the things which be Cæsar's, and unto God the things which be God's."

"We ought to obey God rather than men."

"It is better, if the will of God be so, to suffer for well-doing than for evil-doing."

"If when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God."

A Bicentenary Ode;

DEDICATED TO

THE EVANGELICAL NONCONFORMISTS OF 1862.

"WHAT do these feeble Jews?" Sanballat said,
Before his brethren and Samaria's host;
"Out of the heaps of rubbish which are burn'd
Will they revive the stones, and fortify
Themselves despite us? Will they sacrifice?
And make an end in a day?" The Ammonite,
Tobiah, was beside him, and he said,

"If but a fox go up on what they build,
Their stone wall will break down." 'Twas thus
they mock'd.
But the work prosper'd and the wall was built.
Like task, but greater, fills your hands to-day;
Like fate befals you, labouring to re-build
The walls that should enclose Jerusalem.
But be ye of a strong heart, and pursue
Your task in prayer, in meekness, and in faith.
Yea, from the rising of the morning till
The stars appear, as did those Jews of old,
Labour, and faint not, for the work is God's.
If God be for us, who can be against?
They whom He blesses can endure reviling,
As the great Master once. Enliven, then,
Your toil with Zion's songs. Let scowl and sneer
Serve but as foils to your untroubled looks.
Say to your Rock, Help us, O Lord our God;

So help, that they may know this is Thy hand,
And own that Thou hast done it. Let them curse,
If only Thou wilt bless, and in our work—
Thine rather—make us strong and prevalent,
Until the city's walls are built again,
And on their circling strength shall meekly stand
The men that raised them, and shall ask each other,
Where are the mockers and maligners now?

THE MARTYRS OF CONSCIENCE.

YE are heirs of a fame that out
Of the stilly darkness sprang,
Not from the cannon's smoke, the rout,
The carnage, the field that rang
With the conqueror's mighty shout.
A fame whose dawn was slow,
And out of suffering grew,
From the day of Black Bartholomew,
Two centuries ago.
Many a fair fame has run
Beyond its zenith since then,
Or sunk into night again,

But yours—how crescive it seems!
Fresh as the morning light,
Strong as the morning sun,
It mounts the years to a noon as bright,
A noon that flings its beams
On half the race below.

Invincibly clad
In the armour of conscious right,
Not craven, though sad,
Ye stood in that evil day,
And a sereless victory won.
On you who singly thought
Of Christ's, has come, unsought,
Posterity's "well-done."

Sharp at the time was the cost,
Cruelly struck was the blow;

But whatever was taken away—
Your homes, your children's bread,
The flocks ye had so well tended and fed—
Far more was left than taken;
Far higher good than such
As a monarch's finger can touch,
Or a monarch's favour bestow,
Or a monarch buy with the crown on his head.
For ye kept, when stript the most,
Your integrity unshaken,
And with it, ever nigh,
The Friend that was erst your stay;
Ye kept a single eye,
As clear as prophet's in trance,
A joy-lit countenance,
A breast that harbour'd no fears,
A confidence unworn,
Unruffled by disaster,

A compassion like the tears,
A peace like the peace, of the Master;
A hope like the Risen One's too—
Serener than the expanse,
Diviner than the blue,
Of an immaculate morn.
Ye men of that lofty deed
Of Sixteen Hundred and Sixty-two—
A seamless monolith
Wrought for yourselves, and with
Your own hands set in its place;
Around whose four-square base
In this Bicentenary
A grateful throng appears,
To catch its inspiration stands;—
Ye men, to whom the lyric was due
For all after-time to read,
Till from her slavish bands

The Church of Christ shall be free—
Has the bard still fail'd to sing of you
For these now two hundred years?

Can it be that the Muse,
Who hath never ceased since then
For worthy brows her wreathing bud
And flower and leaf to cull;—
Hath paid with a golden pen
So many golden dues
To the true, and right, and good,
As well as beautiful;
Hath sung again and again
Of woman's lovely face,
Of doughty deeds for freedom done,
Of glory sought and won
In danger's foremost place;
Hath roused herself to tell

The melancholy story
Of those who pine in chains
For loving right too well;
Hath used her nicest pains
To paint the sunset's glory,
Or hues at day-break seen—
Grey, amber, paly green,
Orange, and crimson fleck'd with dun,
And dun that crimson rims,
And dolphin-shaped vermilion
That in the sapphire swims,
Pink melting in candescent gold,
That soon itself before the sun
Into white morning wanes;—
Can it be that the Muse,
Who dotes on nature's beauty
With delight so manifold,
Is unmoved by fairer hues

Than nature's loveliest?
Can it be she is blind
To a beauty diviner still—
To the Finger that paints,
To the colours that fill,
The cerulean lives of saints
Who for God and mankind
Do their suffering best?

The poet honours duty,
Bends lowly at her feet
In homage true and sweet,
Calls her the "daughter of the Voice of God;"
Whose smile where'er she goes
Makes spring-time of the ground,
Pranks the bare sod
With sudden flowers,
Sets free the prison'd rose,

And scatters gladness round.
Benignest of the powers
That o'er His works are set,
Who keeps the pillar'd welkin strong,
The mazy stars from wrong,
And all things stable yet:
To whom the poet cries:—
Thou best of guides,
My leader be;
My weakness nerve
With earnest strides
To follow thee.
My feet preserve
From every snare
That round me lies.
Prosper my days,
And bless my nights,
And let me share

Thy well-earn'd praise
And pure delights.
Come good or ill,
Come love or hate,
Come feast or fast,
Come any fate,—
My changeless will
Keep one with thine:
The strength thou hast
In me create;
O make it mine
To do the right;—
For duty still
To do and bear,
And leave undone;
To work, and wait,
And hope, until
My race is run:

So let me wear
In realms of light
The crown at last.

So ye now wear the same,
Ye faithful ones and true;
If not the golden as yet,
A garland of purest fame,
That victors such as you
Before the judgment get.
Ye, who this earth erewhile,
Like Christ rejected trod,
Despising like Him the shame,
In the paradise of God;
Now share his glory too,
Now sun you in his smile,
Now walk with Him in white

The amaranthine meads,
And hear the crystal bubbling
Of the fountains where he leads.
Ye have done with the serpent's spite,
Ye have done with his children's deeds,
Ye have done with the wicked's troubling,
And persecution's might,
That but for a night endures.
For the ban, the blessing is yours.
Ye have done with the prelate's curse,
Ye have done with the court's deceit,
Ye have done with the law's oppression—
The outcast's want, and, worse,
The malefactor's cell.
Fast by the nectarous brim
Of the river of life ye meet;
Of the tree of life ye eat,
With the Prince of Life ye dwell,

And join'd in glorious session,
The nations rule with him.

As one but little devout
In the royal Abbey feels
At some great festival;
Has scarce a thought about
The grandest thing of all
In that proud ceremony—
The worship of him who kneels
In living, loving fear;
Forgets the unseen, to admire
Only what strikes the eye
And captivates the ear:—
Painted windows ablaze
In the sun's transfiguring rays—
The prismy hues that fall,

Each like an angel's smile,
On pillar, and tomb, and aisle—
The organ's soft and clear,
Or thunder-pealing, tones—
The hymning of the quire—
The proudly pendent grace
Of the silken spoils of war—
The prince upon his dais—
The warrior's medall'd breast—
Beauty in diamonds drest—
The gala robes of peer
Who the envied garter owns
And decorating star.
A transient sensuous bliss
To such an one is this;
But he wonders not who there
Is the holiest worshipper,
And inly deck'd the most

With the joy of the Holy Ghost.
So the bard hath often stood
(So now too often stands)
In the house not made with hands—
The temple of earth and sky;
And, with all he saw entranced,
Hath call'd it very good.
He has heard the orchestral din
Of the lightning-lighted storm,
His versatile eye has glanced
From object to object of wonder,
And from beautiful form to form;
He hath worshipp'd the solemn vast,
And been thrill'd with the mystery,
To beauty so near akin,
That broods or moveth under
That firmamental roof.
The building's height

And breadth and length,
Its massive strength
That fears one only blast—
The great Archangel's at last—
And all the glory within,
Both near him and aloof,
Have fill'd him with delight.
He hath praised the stately actors
Who arise from age to age
On the world's magnific stage,
Hath said, "Ye are gods, ye are gods!"
Hath shared in the vulgar sin,
The sin that sceptres so oft
Have turn'd into scorpion rods.
His lyre has lifted aloft
The name of each foremost man
In senate and court and camp,
But seldom the deeds of those

Who are men of Christ's own stamp—
Are champions in the van
Of Him who the white horse rides,
The bravest of hell's foes,
And beyond dispute besides,
Earth's greatest benefactors.

Even so, ye outcast ones—
Ye who so much sacrificed
And bore for conscience and Christ,
And obtained for us your sons—
So ye served those evil days
When the vilest men were exalted,
And sin in the royal favour bask'd,
And in riot and pride
The wicked walk'd on every side;
When the path of well-doing was doubly steep,
And the upright were few, and could only keep

Their uprightness at heavy cost;
When ungodliness grew bold,
And the love of many wax'd cold,
And the salt as widely its savour lost,
And vainly the faithful remnant ask'd,
"Wherewith shall it be salted?"
When priestly rulers like those
In the Gospels described to us—
Proud, vindictive, and covetous—
Against the saints of Christ arose,
And, affecting the Church's weal,
With pharisaic zeal
Cover'd a pharisaic intent,
Strove by a godless parliament,
And persecuting laws,
Sharp as the dragon's claws,
To bring the Gospel's defeat about,
And trample its holy brightness out.

But modern Pharisees—
Blind leaders of the blind,
Like those of an earlier age—
May lord it as they please;
May wreak their haughty rage
On the poor in spirit, who find
And follow the better way;
May call their conscience conceit,
May denounce them as pestilent fellows,
Seditious, and what not,
With abuse, as the smith with his bellows,
May blow the furnace hot;
They may worry blameless men,
As the time permits; what then?
A Nazarene need not say:
Let some new Gamaliel repeat
The old one's warning again.
The stem of Jesse's rod

Burgeons the more for the angry blast;
And 'tis seen, when the storm is past,
That the weakness of God
Is stronger than men,
And His foolishness wiser than they.

The Law said, Swear to the book
With assent and consent unfeign'd;
The law no cleric would brook
Unless by a bishop ordain'd.
But Conscience said, What they call
The true line, and the pastoral grace
It transmits, are nothing at all
But a figment of priestly pride—
A braggart imp of Rome,
That cannot too soon be whipt back to his home,
Too sternly our borders denied.
Shall I foully cast

A slur on solemnities past,
True ordination vows erase,
To honour so brazen a varlet,
Lording it in his mother's scarlet?
And Conscience said, In sooth
The book mixes error with truth;
Plants in the Church by baptismal water,
More than by faith in the blood that bought her;
Makes the bread and wine from the hands of the priest
A mystical part of the Gospel feast:
Calls, as in blasphemous sport,
The man who surrounds his throne
With the shame of a Cyprian court,
"Our most religious king;"
In the weeping or tearless ring
That commits the dust to dust,
O'er every grave the dead it blesses,

A sure and certain hope professes
Of him by God abhorr'd,
As well as of the just,
That his soul rests with the Lord,
And with the happy dead.
And so Conscience said,
I cannot profess
A belief unfeign'd
Of all things contain'd
In the book, or pronounce errorless.
I cannot admit the sign
To be more than a sign of grace,
Or make the font the starting-place
And source of a life divine.
Beside the hopeless grave
Of an unconverted sinner
I cannot say black is white;—
The unblest I cannot bless,

I cannot make him the winner
Of a crown of righteousness,
Or give him a palm to wave
Among the sons of light.
So Conscience spake; and the deed
With the dictate grandly agreed:
A truer the sun
Never look'd upon
Than for conscience then was done.

Not as ransom'd Israel
Pass'd from the wilderness
The good land to possess;—
With the ark of testimony
To a land that flow'd with milk and honey
Sinning and murmuring went;
Not so to you it fell,
Nor so did ye rebel.

At any cost content
What Conscience bade to do,
Meekly and murmuring not,
Blameless as the man in whom
His foes could find no fault,
Ye left, that Saint Bartholomew,
A goodly-portioned lot,
For a desert land and salt.
Left the gladness for the gloom;
Left your happy fallen lines,
Bless'd with more than prosper'd vines,
And the fig-tree's leafy shade;—
Homes of plenty and of peace,
Whose unsullied purity
Rivall'd Canaan's whitest fleece;
Home delights of fairer bloom
Than the grape's, and more abounding
Than its summer bunches rounding

To their full maturity,
Or the increase, sixty-fold,
Of the field's ungarner'd gold.
These ye left, and all that made
Home without and home within—
Days in faithful labours pass'd,
Smoothly into bygone sliding,
Comforts round the hearth abiding,
Cares on Him that careth cast—
Blest as in this world of sin
Godliness can lose or win.

Ye left it, and in leaving
Awhile forgot your grieving,
As ye raised the fervent prayer,
Not for yourselves alone,
Or wives, or little ones,
Or flocks whose benisons

Made parting harder to bear;
But for a faithless king,
Who gave good words for his throne,
Only, when gotten, to fling
To the winds his gratitude.
And the men that with a rude
And spiteful hand had stript
Your dewy branch so bare,
With tongues in venom dipt
Had wrought you all that care,—
These in your heart ye bless'd,
And from your hearts forgave—
Hearts as meek and as brave
As ever men possess'd.

Departing in such manner,
Forth on that August day,
Beneath God's unseen banner,

From your pleasant bounds ye went
To tread the desert waste—
The pathless wilderment—
The homeless solitude—
With scarce a palm-tree graced;
For shelter cast and food
Upon the Friend above.
Him ye loved with stronger love,
More with His were satisfied,
The more your faith was tried
By days in travail spent;—
By the desert's hungry fast,
By its pestilential air,
By its scorching, stinging blast,
By its manifold affright
On the left hand and the right,
Its perils everywhere.
Till death removed you thence,

Some less for Christ, some more,
Such wilderness pangs ye bore—
A living martyrdom,
Of whose great recompence,
Part reap'd, and part to come,
All after-time is heir.

What now has England to say
Of the debt that she owes
To that faithful band? To those
Who when Cæsar claimed
The things that are God's,
So righteously dared
To give him his own,
Nor less to the loftier throne:
Defamation and ban,
And pains prepared
To avenge the crime

Of paying to both their dues,
Bore like that glorious man
Who in the Gospel's prime
Was five times scourged by the Jews,
And beaten thrice with rods,
But never of Christ ashamed.

What now has England to say,
In this long after year,
To the issues of that dark day?
Who shall tell us all we owe,
Not to them who made it so,
Or them that endured it merely?
But chiefly and most
To that God above
Whose fathomless love—
Wiser than all our fear,
Stronger than all our doubt—

Still baffles the gates of hell,
And brings about
Its own decree;—
That no part of the cost
Of travail and pain,
At which His martyrs so dearly
Serve the truth and their kind,
Shall ever be lost,
Or cease to be
To the race, as well
As themselves, a gain
Still found and to find.

What now has England to say,
After two hundred years,
Of the strength she still recruits
From the so costly fruits
Of that far Autumn day?

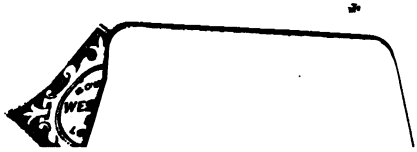
The Truth wherein we glory,
As now she carves her way
In fields of wider reaping,
For very ripeness hoary,—
What magnifying story
Has the Truth herself to tell
Of the men who served her so well,
Of that time of weeping,
And the seed then sown in tears?

In candour or in spleen
Let whoso will gainsay,
"So fair and foul a day"
As that Bartholomew's
Our land has never seen.
While the rains and dews
Shall fall our fields to bless,
Or our Aprils lose

And recover the sun's caress,
  Or in vermeil hues
Our blossoming orchards dress;
  While the mounted thrush
Shall warble his valentine,
  Or the day-break's flush
Crimson the rippling brine,
  Or Evening's hush
Worship a west divine;
  While the Spring shall wear
The colours that best become her,
  From half-leaf'd, half-bare,
Shall burst into glorious Summer;
  While our eaves shall trickle
With the summer's pleasant rain,
  And the reaper's sickle
Be laid to the bending grain;
  While Autumn shall blazon

Our moorlands in purple and gold,
And stars their liaison
With the deepening twilight hold;
While our brooks shall murmur
Their joy to the brooding vast,
And oaks root the firmer
For every buffeting blast;
While the flag of Britain
Shall remember its ancient vow,
Our annals be written
In lines as worthy as now;
While our ships shall bring us
The outcast from every shore,
While our bards shall sing us
The songs of a glorious yore;
While the later Saxons
In the steps of their sires shall tread—
To the same great actions

By the same great virtues led;
  While round hearth and ingle
A God-fearing seed shall meet,
  And fair cheeks shall tingle
At wrong with a passionate heat;
  While our sons resemble
John's barons and Cromwell's men,
  For the ark only tremble,
Iron-will'd as our fathers then;
  While the land shall honour
The freedom that makes her great,
  By God's hand upon her
Shall keep it inviolate;—
  So long shall your story
Be read, and your memory blest,
  On yourselves the glory,
On your foes the shame, shall rest.
  So long in high musing

Live roses your tablets shall grace,
So long, never losing
Their freshness, to others give place.
Your fame's alabaster
Shall shine with as pure a white
As Pollux and Castor
In the rift of a baleful night.
Renew'd benediction
The Martyrs of Conscience shall crown,
A perjured eviction
Shall win you an endless renown.

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